CHAPTER 1: BEING AN IMAGE OF GOD

This chapter argues that Scripture forms the basis of Gregory's vision of the human *eikon*. As observed in the Introduction, the fourth-century was a complex syncretism of philosophical trends and ideas; undoubtedly Gregory absorbed a variety of beliefs. Gregory's work has been read traditionally in light of Plato,[1] Aristotle,[2] Stoicism,[3] Plotinus,[4] Philo,[5] and Origen.[6] Towards the turn of the last century scholars began to

---

[1] Henri Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze: Essai sur le relations du Christianisme et de l'Hellénisme dans son oeuvre théologique* (La Roche-sur-Yon, France: G. Romain, 1925); Jan M. Szymusiak, *Éléments de théologie de l'homme selon saint Grégoire de Nazianze* (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1963), 29.

[2] Andrew O.P. Hofer, *Christ in the Life and Teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 124-51.

[3] Susanna Elm, "Inscriptions and Conversions: Gregory of Nazianzus on Baptism (Or. 38-40)," in *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton (New York, USA: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 1-35; Althaus, *Die Heilslehre des heiligen*, 57-60; Boris Maslov, "οἰκείωσις πρὸς θεόν: Gregory of Nazianzus and the Heteronomous Subject of Eastern Christian Penance," *ZAC* 16 (2012): 311-43.

[4] Dayna Kalleres, "Demons and Divine Illumination: A Consideration of Eight Prayers by Gregory of Nazianzus," *VC* 61, no. 2 (2007): 157-88.

[5] Francesco Trisoglio, "Filone Alessandrino e l'esegesi cristiana: contributo alla conoscenza dell'influsso esercitato da Filone sul IV secolo, specificatamente in

explore more fully the way in which Gregory uses Scripture in order to make his claims about doctrine. Frances Young, Ben Fulford, Brian Matz, Paul Gallay, and Kristoffel Demoen provide a sample of those who have brought to the fore different aspects of Gregory's exegesis and made clear the extent to which Gregory draws on Scripture to form his arguments.[7]

Beginning with a brief overview of Gregory's hermeneutics, we shall see that Gregory approaches the Bible primarily in light of Jesus Christ as the "focal center of God's ordering of all of history."[8] Moving on from here, we explore the predominant biblical themes from which Gregory draws in order to form his vision of the human *eikon*. These entail: Christ the visible *Eikon*; beliefs about images and idols in light of the creation narratives in Genesis; the ethical implications of being an *eikon;* and later

---

Gregorio de Nazianzo," *ANRW* II, 21, no. 1 (1984): 588-730.

[6] Claudio Moreschini, "Nuove considerazione sull'origenismo di Gregorio Nazianzo," in *Origene e l'alessandrinismo cappadoce (III-IV secolo),* ed. Mario Giradi and Marcello Marin (Bari: Edipuglia, 2002), 207-18.

[7] Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Ben Fulford, *Divine Eloquence*; Brian Matz, *Gregory of Nazianzus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2016); Paul Gallay, "La Bible dans l'oeuvre de Grégoire de Nazianze le Théologien," in *Le monde greg ancien et la Bible*, ed. Claude Mondésert (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1984), 313-34; Kristoffel Demoen, *Pagan and Biblical Exempla in Gregory Nazianzen: A Study in Rhetoric and Hermeneutics* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996).

[8] Fulford, *Divine Eloquence*, 1; Mario Baghos, "St Gregory the Theologian's Metanarrative of History," *Phronema* 26, no. 2 (2011): 63-79, 75.

pseudepigraphal interpretations which set the *eikon* in a cosmological battle with the devil. Like the church fathers before him, Gregory deploys *eikon* in a variety of ways, describing primarily the human person and Christ, but also referring to metaphors, paintings and pagan statues.[9] Gregory's broad application reflects the fact that *eikon* plays a substantial role in patristic theology, occupying over five pages in Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon,* compared with less than a page in Liddell, Scott and Jones' *A Greek-English Lexicon*.[10] Deriving from εἴκω, which translates as "to be like, to seem," εἰκών can mean "likeness" in the sense of that which is physical, such as a picture or a statue, or that which is immaterial, for example, a phantom or semblance. We shall see that this melting pot of interpretations feed into Gregory's overall vision of the *eikon*. Although Christian iconography was beginning to be discussed by Christians in the fourth century, we do not move on to discuss this since Gregory himself mentions only pagan images.[11]

---

[9] For *eikon* being used to depict paintings; see Or. 2.11 (SC 247, 104); 4.65 (SC 309, 172); 4.80 (SC 309, 202); 11.2 (SC 405, 332); 14.32 (PG 35, 900D); 21.22 (SC 270, 156); *eikon* as metaphor; Carm. 1.2.24 (PG 37, 793, 37); *eikon* as pagan statues; Or. 11.5 (SC 405, 338); Carm. 1.2.27 (PG 37, 854, 8).

[10] Geoffrey W.H. Lampe, *PGL* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 410-16; Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th with supplement ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940; repr., 1973), 485.

[11] Also observed by Jostein Børtnes, "Eikôn Theou: Meanings of Likeness in Gregory of Nazianzus." In *Studia Patristica 41,* edited by Frances M. Young, Mark J. Edwards and Paul Parvis, (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 287-91. For the beginnings of Christian worship of images, see Ernst Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age before

Gregory's Hermeneutics

Gregory makes explicit his view of the books which he considers to be "divinely inspired," in a poem entitled *On the Genuine Books of Divinely Inspired Scripture*.[12] He states that all else is not genuine, although, as Demoen and Gallay have observed, this does not prevent him from citing and alluding to numerous extra-canonical books which are not included in this list.[13] For example, Gregory mentions by name the books of Wisdom and of Revelation, although they are excluded from his poem.[14]

As Daley has suggested, iconographers often depict Gregory holding a Bible because, for Gregory, Scripture could be said to be the "doorway to divinization."[15]

Iconoclasm," *DOP* 8 (1954): 83-150, 88-150.

[12] Carm. 1.1.12 (PG 37, 472-474). This poem is translated by Brian Dunkle, *Poems on Scripture: Saint Gregory of Nazianzus* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012), 37-39.

[13] Paul Gallay, "La Bible dans l'oeuvre de Grégoire de Nazianze le Théologien," 318; for example, the Book of Judith is cited in Or. 45.15 (PG 36, 644B); Baruch 3.36 is cited in Or. 30.13 (SC 250, 252-54); Or. 1.6 (SC 247, 78-80) is reminiscent of Tobit 10.4.

[14] Or. 42.23 (SC 384, 100-02) denotes Solomon as the author of Wisdom.

[15] Brian Daley, "Walking through the Word of God: Gregory of Nazianzus as a Biblical Interpreter," in *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays*, ed. J. Ross Wagner, Christopher Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 514-31, 523.

When we consider the question of Gregory's biblical interpretation, we must remember that he approached the Bible as a priest and a pastor, concerned both with his own purity and that of the Church. He wrote a prayer for praying prior to reading Scripture; in this he writes that the Bible is a book of "holiness and purity" through which God may attend to the soul of God's servant.[16] He considers time spent dwelling in the written word to be the best use of time; this is indicated by the vast number of poems which comprise passages of the Bible put to verse, produced by Gregory for the purpose of easy memorisation.[17] Aside from poems, much of Gregory's biblical interpretation occurs in the context of festal orations, where language is sacramental, conveying "the eternal meaning of the biblical events that are being celebrated."[18] Gregory writes that only the one whose heart has been made to burn as she reads the Bible is fit to stand and speak about God, since the text itself is a means of illumination.[19] He counts himself among those who are illumined, since in *On the Holy Spirit*, Gregory bases his arguments for the deity of the Spirit solely on Scripture, thus demonstrating that he is able both to interpret the Bible and speak about God.[20] Whilst Gregory did not leave behind a plethora of exegetical commentaries, we should not conclude that the act of interpretation was of little

[16] Carm. 1.1.35 (PG 37, 517, 10).

[17] Carm. 1.1.15 (PG 37, 475-506).

[18] Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis,* 143-44.

[19] Or. 2.71 (SC 247, 182-84); 2.96-97 (SC 247, 214-16); 40.37 (SC 358, 282-84).

[20] For further discussion of Gregory's use of Scripture in the defence of the Spirit; see Thomas A. Noble, "Gregory Nazianzen's Use of Scripture in Defence of the Deity of the Spirit," *TB* 39 (1988): 101-23.

consequence to him.[21] On the contrary, Gregory prizes not only the Bible itself, but also holds clear ideas about how it should be read and by whom it should be interpreted.[22] As Fulford has argued, Gregory continued in Origen's understanding of Scripture, whilst "formulating a hermeneutic of the biblical witness to Jesus Christ."[23] Origen's three senses roughly correspond to the literal, moral and spiritual readings representing body, soul and spirit; above all, allegory is prized.[24] Our purpose does not concern the nuances of how Gregory follows Origen, other to recognise that Gregory's overall approach to Scripture should not be simply categorised as 'typological', 'literal' or 'allegorical'.[25] Our focus here is on how Gregory interprets Scripture in light of salvation history.

A number of commentators have drawn attention to the idea that for Gregory "the Bible *is* Christ, because its every word brings us into the presence of the one who spoke it."[26] This approach differs from the majority of contemporary Western biblical

[21] Or. 37 (SC 318, 270-319) is Gregory's only exegetical oration, focusing on Matt 19:12.

[22] Or. 31:21-24 (SC 250, 314-22).

[23] Ben Fulford, "Gregory of Nazianzus and Biblical Interpretation," in *Re-Reading Gregory of Nazianzus*, ed. Christopher A. Beeley (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 31-66; 31-32.

[24] For Origen's system of exegesis, see Karlfried Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 48-78.

[25] Fulford, "Gregory of Nazianzus and Biblical Interpretation," 32.

[26] Paul Evdokimov, *Orthodoxy*, trans. Jeremy Hummerstone (New York: New City Press, 2011), 194; Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible*

scholarship. For, when approaching the biblical narrative of the human story, and in particular the human *eikon*, Western scholars often read it in light of the "creation, fall, redemption" narrative which runs from Genesis to Revelation. Gregory's narrative does not follow a strictly linear construction, where the incarnation is simply the next chapter in the story of salvation. This is evident when he speaks about the creation of humanity in writings concerned primarily with Christ, or the Christian lifestyle, for example, *On the Theophany,*[27] *On the Lights*,[28] *On New Sunday*,[29] *On Sacred Pascha*,[30] poems which occur in his *Arcana*, and *In Praise of Virginity*.[31] Thus, Christ is not conceived as though he were at the middle of a straight line, where there is a "before" and an "after."[32] Rather than two distinctive actions, creation and salvation should be understood as a continual process in light of Christ, "bringing the creature… to the stature of the Saviour, by whom and for whom all creation came into

---

in Ancient Christianity, Vol 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 749.

[27] Or. 38 (SC 358, 104-38).

[28] Or. 39 (SC 358, 150-97).

[29] Or. 44 (PG 36, 608A-622A).

[30] Or. 45 (PG 36, 623A-664C). The creation of the human person in Oration 38 is repeated almost verbatim in Oration 45.

[31] Carm. 1.2.1 (PG 37, 521-578); Peter Bouteneff, *Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008), 168.

[32] Or. 2.88 (SC 247, 202-04).

being."[33] The principal implication of Gregory's view of the incarnation means that he reads Scripture as a unified whole, focusing on the narrative of salvation. For example, in *On Love for the Poor*, Gregory moves from the Old Testament through to the New Testament, highlighting all the varying ways God has demonstrated his mercy through the ages.[34] This relates to the way in which Gregory views

> … the convergence of humanity and divinity in Christ's person at the incarnation, the significance of which (as both a remedy to evil and as opening up the potential for deification) places Christ metaphorically at the centre of the historical process.[35]

This approach determines Gregory's use of intertextuality, which Hays defines, "the embedding of fragments of an earlier text within a later one."[36] An example of this lies in Gregory's first Easter oration where he reads the Israelites' escape from Egypt both in light of Christ's passion and resurrection and the new life for those following Christ.[37]

Turning to the biblical themes upon which Gregory draws to inform his vision

---

[33] John Behr, *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006), 86.

[34] Or. 14.27 (PG 35, 892D-896A); Carm. 1.1.9 (PG 37, 456-464).

[35] Baghos, "Metanarrative of History," 75.

[36] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 14.

[37] Or. 1.1-5 (SC 247, 72-94).

of the human *eikon*, let us begin with Christ.

Christ, the Dynamic Image

Gregory's interpretation of Christ as *Eikon* originates in the Greek translation of the Hebrew in Genesis 1:26-27; ויאמר אלהים נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו.[38] The differences are minor: the Septuagint omits the second pronominal suffix "our" and repeats the prefix "according to" (καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ᾽εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ᾽ὁμοίωσιν).[39] Nevertheless, Philo explains that they are important. The early Christians preserved his work for generations; furthermore, he serves as the first main overlap between Greek philosophical thought and Judaism. Although Gregory himself makes no direct reference to Philo in his surviving works, Trisoglio has demonstrated successfully that Gregory is familiar with Philo's thought.[40] Regarding Genesis 1:26-27, Philo explains that moving from the Hebrew "in" to the Greek "according to" points towards the human person as an *eikon* of an *Eikon*.[41] From this position, he lays out a system of thought regarding the *eikon*, where the *eikon* is the Logos, through

[38] *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 2. Whilst Gen 1:26-28 are often read together, for our purposes we will be discussing Gen 1:26-27 throughout.

[39] From hereon I cite LXX first, followed by Hebrew Bible references in ellipsis on the occasions when the references are different.

[40] Trisoglio, "Filone Alessandrino," 588-730.

[41] *Her.* 230-31.

whom the world was made.[42] Origen builds on this by explaining that the Logos is "in" the image of God, whereas humanity is "according to" the image of God:

> In addition a principle [beginning] is that in accordance with which something is, that is, in accordance with its form. So, if indeed the first-born of all creation is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), the Father is his principle. But similarly Christ is the form of those who have come to be in accordance with the image of God. Therefore, if men are created "according to the image", the image itself is "according to the Father."[43]

Whilst Gregory does not offer a systemic explanation like Origen, he follows Philo, Paul, Origen and later fathers by interpreting Christ as the *Eikon* according to whom human *eikones* are created, the implications of which we discuss in depth in the following chapter.

Two further traditions feeding into the concept of Christ as the *Eikon* of God run through the biblical narrative. First, Paul's Adam Christology where Christ is the second Adam, the true bearer of the divine *Eikon* in contrast to Adam;[44] secondly, the

---

[42] *Spec.* 3.81; *Spec.* 3.83; *Leg.* 3.96. John 1:1, 14 refers to Jesus Christ as the Logos.

[43] *Comm. Jn* 1.104; translation, Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (London: Routledge, 1998), 122.

[44] 1 Cor 11:7, 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18, 4:4. George H. Van Kooten, "Image, Form and Transformation. A Semantic Taxonomy of Paul's "Morphic" Language," in *Jesus, Paul, and Early Christianity: Studies in Honour of Henk Jan De Jonge*, ed. Rieuwerd Buitenwerf, Harm W. Hollander, and Johannes Tromp (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 213-42,

portrayal of Wisdom as the *eikon* of God's goodness in Wisdom 7:26 and in Philo.[45] Paul's Adam Christology is the tradition that is most relevant to this study, since its soteriological emphasis is evident in Gregory's thought about the human *eikon*'s restoration, as I discuss shortly. Paul argues that the believer is no longer affiliated to the "first Adam" but rather the goal is to become the *eikon* of the "heavenly man" (1 Cor 15:49). Dragoş Giulea has coined this process *"Eikonic* soteriology" because it represents the "transformation from being the *eikon* of Adam into the *eikon* of the glorious Jesus…the *eikon* of the Heavenly Anthropos and the second Adam."[46] Beginning at baptism (Rom 6:3-5), salvation is viewed through an eschatological lens, whereby humanity's transformation into Christ's *eikon* is understood to be a dynamic process, rather than a "one-off" event. The follower of Christ is transformed by encountering the glory of the Lord through which believers "are being transformed into the same *eikon* from one degree of glory (δόξα) to another" (2 Cor 3:18). This accounts for Gregory's dynamic approach to the human *eikon* which, as we shall discuss in Chapter Five, depicts the *eikon* becoming divine. Next, we look back to the creation chapters in Genesis, arguing that Gregory weaves into his interpretation of these contemporary beliefs about pagan images and idols.

216.

[45] *Leg.* 1.43; see James D.G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 89; Friedrich-Wilhelm Eltester, *Eikon im Neuen Testament*, BZNW (Berlin: Topelmann, 1958), 76.

[46] Dragoş A. Giulea, *Pre-Nicene Christology in Paschal Contexts: The Case of the Divine Noetic Anthropos* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 155.

Images and Idols[47]

The depiction of the human person as God's *eikon* occurs first in Genesis 1:26-27, in which God's creation of humankind forms the climax of the creation account.[48] Since Gregory informs his readers that he does not know Hebrew, the following passage is translated from the Septuagint:[49]

> And God said, "Let us make the human being according to our *eikon* and likeness (καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ᾽εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ

---

[47] A version of this section of the chapter is published as an article in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 72/2, "The Human Icon: Gregory of Nazianzus on Being an *Imago Dei."*

[48] Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, trans. John H. Marks, rev. ed., OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 57. Scholars are generally agreed that the redaction of Genesis 1 belongs to a Priestly source; Gordan J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1987), xxxvii-xlii. For broad coverage of the history of the exegesis of Gen 1:26–28, see Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Continental Commentary*, trans. John Scullion (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 147–55; Gunnlaugur A. Jónsson, *The Image of God: Genesis 1:26-28 in a Century of Old Testament Research*, CBOTS (Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988).

[49] Carm. 2.1.39 (PG 37, 1335, 82-83). Gregory usually read the LXX, occasionally referring to Theodotion's translation, see Demoen, *Pagan and Biblical Exempla*, 235. For an overview of development of the LXX, see Sarah A. Brayford, *Genesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 1-31; John W. Wevers, *Text History of the Greek Genesis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974).

καθ᾽ὁμοίωσιν), and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the flying creatures of heaven, and over the cattle and all the earth, and over all the reptiles that creep on the earth." And God made humankind, according to the *eikon* of God he made it. Male and female he made them (καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον, κατ᾽εἰκόνα θεοῦ ἐποίησεν αὐτόν, ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς) (Gen 1:26-27).[50]

Since our primary concern is Gregory's interpretation of the human *eikon*, we shall discuss the interpretations which are relevant to Gregory's ideas, rather than attempting to resolve the disparities about which contemporary Hebrew Bible scholars debate.[51] In order to inform further the interpretation of the *eikon* in Genesis 1:26-27, Hebrew Bible scholars have attended to the way in which צלם/εἰκών is employed throughout the Old Testament. On a number of occasions צלם /εἰκών describes a physical object, such as a statue or an idol (Wis 2.23, Num 33:52, Ezek

[50] Translation amended from Sophie Cartwright, *The Theological Anthropology of Eustathius of Antioch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 142. Greek text from *Septuaginta*, Alfred Rahlfs (ed.) and emended by Robert Hanhart. Rev.edn. (Stuggart, 2006), 2. צלם is translated consistently as εἰκών throughout the LXX; see Martin Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vollendung der Auslegung*, BZAW (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 48.

[51] For views regarding ontology of the image of God, see Andreas Schüle, "Made in the 'Image of God': The Concepts of Divine Images in Gen 1-3," *ZAW* 117, no. 1 (2005): 1-20, 5. For comments on structure, see Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 29-30. For the function of the *imago Dei*, see Middleton, "Imago Dei in Context," 12.

7:20, Dan 3:1). This, alongside recent archaeological discoveries, has led certain scholars to re-examine ideas of the *eikon* in light of cultures contemporary with those of the Old Testament.[52] Research has demonstrated that the Ancient Near Eastern notion of an image (צלם) involved a ritual process of transformation.[53] Once the ritual was completed, the image of the god was believed to embody the god so fully that the image became the god itself. Egyptian texts make clear that the craftsmen were not concerned primarily with representing what a god looked like; instead, the image was the place where the god manifested itself, "thus the presence of the god and the blessing that accompanied that presence were effected through the image."[54] The images were considered to be living images embodying the divine presence, rather than being merely lifeless wood or bronze statues. In effect, through ritual the images became the gods themselves and were considered to be 'divine.'

This research sheds light not only on aspects of Genesis 1:26-27, but also Genesis 2:7 in which the author depicts the human person being formed from a mixture of earth and breath, akin to the formation of an *eikon* of a god:

---

[52] Edward M. Curtis, "Image of God," in *ABD, H-J*, ed. David N. Freeman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 389-91.

[53] Zainab Bahrani, *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 121-48.

[54] Curtis, "Image of God," 389; Ellen J. Van Wolde, "The Text as an Eloquent Guide: Rhetorical, Linguistic and Literary Features in Genesis 1," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 134-52.

> And God formed a human being, dust from the earth, and breathed into [the human's] face a breath of life, and the human became a living being (Gen 2:7).[55]

Interpreted thus, the human person does not 'possess' the *eikon* within herself, but rather the human person herself is the *eikon*, manifesting the presence of her Creator. This relates to the New Testament claim that Christ is the *Eikon* of the invisible God, who manifests God's presence fully.

Since the Ancient Near Eastern background is located in a vastly different culture from Gregory's, we must establish an overlap in beliefs about images (whether statues or portraits) of gods and emperors in the Graeco-Roman world. Traditionally, scholars are sceptical regarding the belief that the Graeco-Roman gods were present in their statues. This is due to the lack of evidence for any ritual of animation in Ancient Greece, unlike in ancient Mesopotamia.[56] Furthermore, following a negative reading of Platonic mimesis, commentators on Plato have argued that the educated elite understood the *eikon* as merely a copy.[57] However, Plato's application of *eikon* is multifaceted, encompassing linguistic *eikones*, shadows, statues and paintings.[58]

---

[55] Translation adapted from NETS

[56] Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. John Raffan (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), 91.

[57] Verity J. Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Greco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 204; Danielle S. Allen, *Why Plato Wrote* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 174-76.

[58] *Symp.* 215a; *Crat.* 432c; *Resp.* 515a. For a discussion of the impact of names on

Therefore, note that on occasion *eikones* such as the sun, the cave and soul provide us with "models that give access to concepts derived from and participating in imperceptible truths."[59] Whilst Plato does not depict the human as an *eikon,* he describes the cosmos as a sensible god made in the *eikon* of the intelligible.[60] This idea is associated with Plato's theory of Forms, where sensible objects are images of eternal models, in which images denote kinship rather than mere resemblance.[61] This occurs because the *eikon* proceeds from the model, "radiating from the Form" according to Plato.[62] For this reason, on occasion Plato speaks about an *eikon* as possessing great power; for example, Alcibiades declares that the *eikon* of Socrates is capable of making him feel ashamed.[63] Shortly, we shall observe that Gregory describes the effect of a particular portrait of Polemon in a similar manner.

Studies on images have successfully challenged the view that *eikones* are simply copies. They have achieved this by building on the "popular" Graeco-Roman

---

images, see Deborah Steiner, *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 71-73.

[59] Allen, *Why Plato Wrote,* 153. For further discussion of participation see ibid., 148-53.

[60] εἰκὼν τοῦ νοητοῦ θεὸς αισθητός; *Tim.* 92c.

[61] κοινωνία; *Phaed.* 100d-e.

[62] Alain Besançon, *The Forbidden Image: An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 28. On likeness and difference of images, see *Crat.* 432c; *Soph.* 236a.

[63] *Symp.* 216b.

view, which accepted the presence of deities in *eikones*.[64] For example, Augustus banished Poseidon's statue because of bad weather; through this action it was believed that Augustus insulted Poseidon himself.[65] Also, an ambiguity in the Greek language means that "'Artemis' can imply either the goddess herself or an image of her."[66] This explains why so much care had to be taken when handling statues; the "ambiguity afforded an edge of danger, since incorrect treatment of a statue could be construed as an assault on the deity embodied in it."[67] This notion of representation extends to ancient dream theory, where it makes no difference whether the dreamer sees the statue of a god or the god itself.[68] Images of Roman emperors are also

---

[64] Christopher A. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses: Guardians and Statues in Ancient Greek Myth and Ritual* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), passim; Moshe Barasch, *Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 24; Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 37; Jaś Elsner, "Iconoclasm as Discourse: From Antiquity to Byzantium," *Art Bulletin* XCIV, no. 3 (2012): 368-84, 370.

[65] Suetonius, *Aug.* 16.

[66] Pausanias, *Descr.* 3.16.9; Matthew Dillon and Lynda Garland, *Ancient Greece: Social and Historical Documents from Archaic Times to the Death of Alexander* (London: Routledge, 2010), 240; Jaś Elsner, *Roman Eyes: Visuality & Subjectivity in Art & Text* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 11; Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (Harmondsworth: Viking, 1986), 133.

[67] Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 11; Pseudo-Lucian's *Amores,* 15–16.

[68] Barasch, *Icon*, 32-33.

pertinent to this discussion.[69] For instance, Theodosius made Maximus an emperor by erecting the latter's image, which he commanded the people to worship in place of their Alexandrian gods.[70] Furthermore, in Gregory's own lifetime, the images of the emperor Theodosius were smashed to pieces in the tax rebellion in A.D. 387, who was angry precisely because his imperial image "embodied his own actual presence within the city."[71] Thus, a statue of a god embodied the divine presence of the god; likewise *eikones* of emperors were perceived to embody the emperor's presence, functioning as a substitute for the emperor. On the subject of emperors and their *eikones,* in his first invective *Against Julian,* Gregory argues that it is acceptable to venerate an *eikon* of the emperor, but not if pagan gods also feature in the same picture.[72] This is because by the fourth century Christians accepted the emperor cult; but for Gregory, bowing down before portraits or statues of pagan gods was a step too far. He offers no such detail on the relationship between emperors and their *eikones* as Basil, who, in *On the Holy Spirit* writes,

> Because it is said that there is a king and the image of the king, but not two kings, for the power is not divided and the glory is not portioned out... On

[69] Plutarch wrote that the Roman emperor was considered to be an "image of God, who orders all things;" *Princ. Iner.* 780E.

[70] Sabine MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 67.

[71] Frederick G. McLeod, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 236.

[72] Or. 4.80-81 (SC 309, 202-06).

account of this the honour of the image passes over to the archetype.[73]

Thus far, we have seen that pagan *eikones* are likenesses which have the potential to carry some presence or power of the figure represented, whether it is an emperor or a god. Pagan and Christian ideas about the power of certain portraits are also pertinent to this discussion. Recall Alcibiades' reaction to the *eikon* of Socrates, which made him feel ashamed. We see a similar idea at work in Gregory's second poem *On Virtue*.[74] In this poem, Gregory recounts the experience of a whore, who comes across an *eikon* of Polemon in the home of a dissolute youth.[75] First, Gregory informs his reader that Polemon was a man who was known for "getting the better of the passions." He moves on to suggest that whoever encounters the portrait of Polemon meets with the image of man who is said to be virtuous. Gregory describes the immense power of Polemon's gaze staring out from the portrait to such an extent that the woman was put to shame "as if he were alive (ζῶν)."[76] Gregory's description suggests that particular *eikones* bear a presence, or a power, which means that the

---

[73] *On the Holy Spirit* 18.45 (SC 17, 194). Translation, Stephen M. Hildebrand, PPS (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 80-81. Børtnes has identified that John Damascene quoted extensively from all the Cappadocians in the florilegia to his *Treatises against the Iconoclasts*; see "Rhetoric and Mental Images," 37.

[74] Carm. 1.2.10 (PG 37, 680-754).

[75] For the identity of Polemon, see Wayne Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 22.

[76] Carm. 1.2.10 (PG 37, 738, 807).

person encountering them meets, in some way, the figure that the portrait is depicting. Gregory reinterprets a contemporary belief to serve a specific purpose in his corpus of poems, which relates to the practice of the Christian faith. We assume that Gregory is drawing upon the belief that pagan statues or portraits possessed the potential to gaze at their onlookers in a way that suggests "magical powers."[77] This relates, albeit indirectly, to the beliefs about images and idols manifesting the presence of the god or figure they depict, which filter through a variety of ancient cultures.

Ideas such as these, i.e. pagan images and idols bear the presence of the god or emperor which they embody, appear to have contributed to the interpretation of Genesis 1:26-27 in the work of theologians preceding Gregory; for example, Clement of Alexandria, living in the second-century. He asserts that human persons are rational sculptures of the Logos of God (*Prot*. I.5.4, I.6.4). As Nasrallah argues, Clement, "engages and reverses the theological statements of statuary and images that repeated across the cityscapes of the Greek East."[78] She goes as far as to suggest that Clement's ideas about the image of God cannot be understood outside of the second-century Alexandria which is a landscape full of ideas about statues and idols:[79]

---

[77] Børtnes, "Rhetoric and Mental Images in Gregory," 39.

[78] Laura Nasrallah, "The Earthen Human, the Breathing Statue: The Sculptor God, Greco-Roman Statuary, and Clement of Alexandria," in *Beyond Eden: The Biblical Story of Paradise [Genesis 2-3] and its Reception History*, ed. Konrad Schmid and Christopher Riedweg (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 110-40; 110. I am indebted to Crispin Fletcher-Louis for pointing me to Nasrallah's work.

[79] Nasrallah, "The Earthen Human, 110.

> We must also take these statues seriously as *theological* statements. That is, even as Christians debate incarnation and *theosis*, so also these statues say something about human possibilities of becoming divine, and about the divine in human form.[80]

Clement is not the only theologian to consider the human *eikon* as a physical *eikon*; Irenaeus also emphasises the inclusion of the body when discussing the human *eikon*, resulting in the whole human person being, quite literally, an *eikon* of God.[81] Thus, the human person could be said to be divine because she is an *eikon* of God, embodying the spirit of God.

Consider that for a human *eikon* to function like a pagan *eikon, eikon* must relate to the whole human person and not only the spiritual intellect or the soul. This challenges the general view concerning Gregory's approach to the human *eikon*. As observed in the Introduction, scholars generally equate Gregory's understanding of the *eikon* with the soul or the spiritual intellect. This discussion is influenced by the approach of early theologians such as Philo, who argued that the spiritual intellect (νοῦς) is the aspect of the human person which images God.[82] He came to this

---

[80] Nasrallah, "The Earthen Human," 122.

[81] *Dem.* 22; see John Behr, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons: The Apostolic Preaching* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997); Matthew C. Steenberg, *Of God and Man: Theology as Anthropology from Irenaeus to Athanasius* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 17.

[82] *Spec.* 1.171; *Opif.*134; translation David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria, On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses: Introduction, Translation and*

conclusion through his interpretation of the differing creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2. Scholars are almost unanimous in believing that Philo regards the accounts as speaking of two different people; one earthly and one heavenly.[83] For Philo, it is the heavenly person alone who is made according to the *eikon* of God; this notion aligns itself with Philo's idea that the *eikon* is not corporeal, but relates only to the spiritual intellect. A few centuries later, Origen presents the same view: "The soul, not only for the first man, but of all men arose according to the image."[84] Whilst Gregory undoubtedly interprets the human *eikon* as the spiritual intellect on numerous occasions, he also interprets the *eikon* quite literally as a physical *eikon*.

The belief that pagan statues and portraits are likenesses, which have the potential to bear some presence or power of the figure represented, informs Gregory's interpretation of Genesis 1:26-27. For our first example of how Gregory employs these ideas of contemporary statuary, we need look no further than *A Funeral Oration on the Great Basil*. Here we observe Basil functioning in a manner similar to a pagan *eikon*, when Gregory likens him to a statue at the Epiphany Eucharist:

Commentary (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 82. In making this move, Philo protects God from being understood as anthropomorphic, which is crucial to his theology; see *Leg.* 2.1.

[83] *Leg.* 1.31, 2.4. For an informative overview of the history of scholarly interpretation of this problem, see Thomas H. Tobin, *The Creation of Man: Philo and the History of Interpretation*, Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983), 102-34.

[84] Homily 2.1; Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah; Homily on 1 Kings 28*, trans. John Clark Smith, TFC (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 23.

> With body and eyes and mind (διάνοιαν) unswerving, as though nothing new had occurred, but rather being fixed like a statue (ἀλλ᾽ ἑστηλωμένον) so to speak, for God and the altar, while those around him stood in fear and reverence (τοὺς δὲ περὶ αὐτὸν ἑστηκότας ἐν φόβῳ τινὶ καὶ σεβάσματι).[85]

Like a stone or wooden *eikon,* Basil is perfectly still. In the same way that we would expect pagans to respond to a pagan *eikon* with fear and reverence, those around Basil respond likewise with "fear and reverence." In effect, Gregory treats Basil here as though he were a 'divine' *eikon*. If we bear in mind that *eikones* were often seen as being "direct links back to their prototypes," it is logical that those around Basil would revere him, for in revering Basil as God's *eikon,* they revere God.[86]

Elsewhere, ideas about the pagan *eikon* as a bearer of divine presence shed light on the occasions when Gregory contrasts directly the human *eikon* with the pagan *eikon* or idol (*eidola*). Gregory seeks to undermine the power of the pagan *eikon*, by demonstrating the unique status of the human *eikon* when compared to pagan *eikones*. For the human person is the *eikon* who truly bears divine presence because she alone is made alive through God's breath.[87] Gregory makes this point in

---

[85] Or. 43.52 (SC 384, 234).

[86] Peter Stewart, "The Image of the Roman Emperor," in *Presence: The Inherence of the Prototype within Images and other Objects*, ed. Rupert Shepherd and Robert Maniura (Hants., U.K.: Ashgate, 2006), 245-58, 243-44; Suzanne Saïd, "Deux noms de l'image en grec ancien: idole et icône," *CRAI* 131, no. 2 (1987): 309–30, 323.

[87] Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late*

his second poem on *Ignoble Ways of Nobility*:

> For indeed the painted *eikon* (εἰκών) is not greater than
> the *eikon* of the breathing man, even though it shines (τῆς τοῦ πνέοντος ἀνδρὸς, εἰ καὶ λάμπεται).[88]

The notion of the breathing human *eikon* as superior to all other *eikones* relates back to the way in which the human person was created. Conflating the creation accounts in both Genesis 1 and 2, Gregory depicts the human *eikon* as animated through God's Spirit in his poem *On the Soul*:

> As [God] spoke, taking a portion of freshly made earth,
> with immortal hands he established my form and gave to it a share of [God's] own life.
> For into it [God] infused Spirit (πνεῦμα), a fragment of the hidden Godhead.
> From clay and breath a mortal *eikon* of the immortal One (βροτός ἀθανάτοιο εἰκών) was established…[89]

The example above is typical of how Gregory describes the creation of the human *eikon*. She is unique amongst all *eikones* because she is created by God and infused

---

Ancient Christianity (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press Incorporated, 2012), 133-42.

[88] Carm. 1.2.27 (PG 37, 854, 8-9).

[89] Carm. 1.1.8 (PG 37, 452, 70-75).

with God's Spirit. Before we continue to examine Gregory's usage of the contemporary beliefs relating to images and idols, we must pause for a moment to note the significance of Gregory's pneumatological anthropology, a theme to which we shall return in Chapter Five. Above, Gregory describes the formation of the human *eikon* as the earth infused with "Spirit, a fragment of the hidden Godhead." Thus, for Gregory, the Spirit gives life to the *eikon* and therefore gives meaning and purpose to the *eikon*. By being infused with Spirit the *eikon* is able to manifest the presence of God unlike any other kind of pagan idol. By depicting the Spirit present in the creation of the *eikon*, Gregory avoids a common oversight in theological anthropology. This oversight has been observed by Mark Cortez, who has argued that a problem occurs when theologians depict the Spirit as an "eschatological addendum."[90] By this, Cortez refers to the Holy Spirit being discussed only in relation to the renewal and transformation of the human person, but not viewed as present at the creation of the *eikon*.[91] Understood in this way, the Spirit makes an appearance halfway through the salvation story, but only after the fall and consequent need for renewal and healing. The Spirit, when depicted only as doing the work of transforming or renewing the *eikon*, is absent from the initial meaning and purpose of the *eikon*. Contra this, Gregory positions the Spirit quite explicitly at the creation of

[90] Marc Cortez, "Idols, Images and a Spirit-ed Anthropology " in *A Pneumatological Account of the Imago Dei* ed. Myk Habets (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 267-82; 268.

[91] For example, see Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 225-28.

the human *eikon*, before moving on to depict the Spirit's transformation of the *eikon* during and after baptism. By making this move, Gregory not only creates the space for understanding the Spirit's involvement in the creation of the *eikon* in terms of meaning and purpose (i.e. to bear the presence of God) but also he avoids the locating the Spirit as an "eschatological addendum."

As we return to discuss the human *eikon* in light of other kinds of images, let us recall that as far as Gregory is concerned, the *eikon* is different precisely because she bears the Spirit of God and manifests divine presence truly. This becomes evident further through Gregory's use of language in his poem on the ten commandments, as they appear in Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-22.[92] The second commandment in Exodus is relevant to this discussion:

> You shall not make for yourself an idol (εἴδωλον) or likeness of anything whatever is in heaven above and whatever is in the earth beneath and whatever is in the waters beneath the earth (Ex 20:4).[93]

Gregory interprets this commandment as,

> You shall not set up an empty likeness and a breathless *eikon* (οὐ στήσεις ἴνδαλμα κενὸν καὶ ἄπνοον εἰκώ).[94]

---

[92] Carm. 1.1.12 (PG 37, 471-474).

[93] Translation from NETS

[94] Carm. 1.1.15 (PG 37, 476).

Whilst εἴδωλον occurs in both Exodus and Deuteronomy, Gregory exchanges it for εἰκών in his interpretation of the commandment. Since Gregory is famed for his rhetoric and chooses his words carefully, we should not assume that the alteration was either an oversight or merely to fit with the metre of the poem. Rather, Gregory appears to recall that there is only one true *eikon* of God; namely, the human person. Frances Young offers a thesis which relates to Gregory's application of the ten commandments. She explores early church fathers' concepts of *eikon* in relation to Exodus 20:4 and idolatry; Colossians 1:15 and Christology; Genesis 1:27 and anthropology, arguing that these three passages are implicitly related in Athanasius, the Cappadocians, and Cyril of Jerusalem.[95] Young draws the three key texts together arguing,

> As the image of the Image of God human beings replace idols, all the more so as the corruption of sin is washed away and they are renewed after the Image in Christ so as to become more and more God-like.[96]

Young's thesis could be furthered by observing that Gregory's poetic reworking of the second commandment, cited above, is an explicit, not implicit, example of the human *eikon* replacing a pagan idol. Furthermore, a significant factor in how the human *eikon* functions on earth relates to where human *eikones* direct their worship.

---

[95] Frances M. Young, "God's Image: The 'Elephant in the Room' in the Fourth Century?," in *Studia Patristica 50*, ed. Allen Brent and Markus Vinzent (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2011), 57-72.

[96] Ibid., 67.

Gregory argues that it is not fitting for mortals to commit idolatry, precisely because they are *eikones* of God:

> It is not right, it is not proper for a mortal to be born from God (οὐδ᾽ ἐπέοικε θεοῦ βροτὸν ἐκγεγαῶτα)
> A beautiful and imperishable *eikon* (ἄφθιτος εἰκών) of the Heavenly Word…
> To give way unlawfully to empty idols (εἴδωλα κενά)
> Of things which live in the sea, the earth and that which flies in the air…[97]

Above, Gregory argues that as an imperishable *eikon* the human person must not worship idols. The human person is the breathing *eikon* because she is filled with the breath of God, compared with idols which are empty; therefore she must not commit idolatry.

We will continue to explore this theme in the following chapter in which we see that Gregory also presents Christ as a physical *Eikon*; and Chapter Three, in which we will discuss how Gregory treats women literally as physical *eikones.* Together these examples build a picture of how Gregory views the *eikon* literally as visible *eikon* of God. I am not suggesting that what Gregory writes about *eikones* and idols is highly theorised; however, throughout his work, Gregory refers to physical *eikones* (whether two or three-dimensional) frequently enough to warrant considering how these concepts inform his overall idea of the human *eikon*.

Becoming Divine

[97] Carm. 2.2.7 (PG 37, 1555, 51-56).

The designation of the double "according to" (κατ᾽εἰκόνα and καθ᾽ ὁμοίωσιν) in the Septuagint translation of Genesis 1:26-27 led fathers, such as Clement, Irenaeus, and Origen, to place a distinction between the *eikon* and the 'likeness.'[98] Interpreted thus, God gives the *eikon* to humanity at creation, whereas the 'likeness' is regarded as a process of transformation which reaches its completion at the eschaton. See Origen's explanation of this below:

> The highest good towards which every rational creature is hurrying, also called the end and goal of all things,... is to become like God as much as possible... this is indeed what Moses is pointing out above all when he describes the original creation of humankind... thus when he said: "In the image of God he created him" and said nothing more about the likeness, he is actually indicating that the human being did indeed receive the dignity of God's image in the first creation, and the dignity of his likeness is reserved for the consummation.[99]

Often scholars attribute this distinction between *eikon* and likeness to the adaptation

---

[98] *Strom.* 2.131.6; *Haer.* 5.6.1; *Princ*. 3.6.1.

[99] *Princ.* 3.6.1, trans. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Origen, Spirit and Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings*, trans. Robert J. Daly (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 56. Also, see *Cels.* 4.30; Crouzel, *Théologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origène*, 217-45; Maximos Aghiorgoussis, "Applications of the Theme "Eikon Theou" (Image of God) according to Saint Basil the Great," *GOTR* 21, no. 3 (1976): 265-88, 276.

of Platonic thought regarding progressive divinity.[100] Knowing God and becoming like God as far as possible (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν) is the *telos* of Plato's philosophical system.[101] According to Van Kooten, this is "the natural extension of the semantic-conceptual field of the image of God."[102] Also, Andrew Louth writes,

> The verse from Genesis, to a Greek philosophical ear, suggested that the human was made in the image of God and that human destiny was assimilation to God, what the Greek Fathers, especially, came to call deification.[103]

Whilst Gregory speaks consistently about the *eikon* becoming divine, unlike Clement and Origen, he offers no explanation regarding the distinction between *eikon* and

---

[100] Julia Annas, *Platonic Ethics, Old and New* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 52; David Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," in *Plato Volume 2: Ethics, Politics, Religion and the Soul*, ed. Gail Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 309-28, 309; Daniel C. Russell, "Virtue as 'Likeness to God' in Plato and Seneca," *JHP* 42, no. 3 (2004): 241-60.

[101] *Symp.* 207c-209e; *Theat.* 176e-177a; Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," 309.

[102] George H. Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 125.

[103] Andrew Louth, "The Fathers on Genesis," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 561-78, 573.

likeness. The closest he comes to describing this distinction is in Gorgonia's funeral oration. Gregory describes Gorgonia's real citizenship being in heaven, drawing from Ephesians 2:17-22, Philipians 3:12-21, Galatians 4:25-26, Hebrews 12:23. On Gorgonia, Gregory writes,

> But if one is to explain her at a higher and more philosophical level, Gorgonia's native land was the "Jersusalem above," the city not yet seen but known, the place of our common life, towards which we hasten – where Christ is citizen, and his fellow citizens the festal gathering and "assembly of the first born whose names are written in heaven," where they celebrate their great founder by contemplating his glory, circling around him in a dance that will never come to an end. There, nobility consists in preserving his image and keeping one's likeness to the archetype (εὐγένεια δὲ ἡ τῆς εἰκόνος τήρησις καὶ ἡ πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον ἐξομοίωσις).[104]

Even here, Gregory does not echo Plato precisely in his approach to human *eikones* becoming divine. Gregory identifies Gorgonia's likeness to the archetype as that which is to be preserved, rather than obtained, and within the context of the followers of Christ being citizens in God's household. Thus, we cannot appreciate fully Gregory's beliefs about becoming divine without also turning to the biblical narrative. We shall return to explore this more fully in Chapter Five.

---

[104] Translation Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 66; Or. 8.6 (SC 405, 256); ἐξομοίωσις in Or. 24.15 (SC 284, 74); 32.15 (SC 318, 116); ὁμοιώσεως in Or. 6.14 (SC 318, 156); Carm. 2.1.12 (PG 37, 1182, 221). Calvet-Sebasti (SC 405, 287) correctly argues that the archetype represents the Father.

Ethics and the Image of God

Being created as an *eikon* of God entails that all human life is precious and must be treated with care and respect. This is the interpretation offered in Genesis 9:6,

> Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for by divine image I made humankind.[105]

This ethical interpretation of Genesis 1 continues to be prevalent throughout pseudepigraphal literature, Philo and the early church fathers.[106] Gregory follows the author of Genesis 9:6 and later interpreters in placing a high value upon the life of the human *eikon* precisely because she images God. Taken from an oration on theological discourse, the lines below exemplify this:

> It is not the same thing to cut down a plant or a flower which blooms temporarily, and a human person (ἄνθρωπος). You are an *eikon* of God and you converse with an *eikon* of God.[107]

---

[105] Translation from NETS

[106] 2 Enoch 44; *Spec.* 3.83; *Comm. Jn.* 13.28.165. For further comments on ethics and the *eikon,* see Jacob Jervell, *Imago Dei: Gen 1,26f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1960), 26-37.

[107] Or. 32.30 (SC 318, 148).

Above, Gregory demonstrates two ways in which he approaches the ethics of being an *eikon* of God; namely function and ontology.[108] First, he argues that, in order to image God, the human *eikon* must imitate God's philanthropy towards other human *eikones*; this relates to the function of the *eikon*. Secondly, Gregory observes that human life is precious because human persons image God; this relates to her ontology. In a further oration, highlighting ethical concerns Gregory states that the ruler must rule fairly because he (i.e. the ruler) is an *eikon* of God. In making this move he argues that the divine function of the human *eikon* is to rule as God rules. Also, Gregory observes that the ruler should rule fairly because those over whom he rules are *eikones* of God.[109] Thus, the human *eikon* warrants fair treatment precisely because she is an *eikon* of God.

Observe this two-pronged approach regarding function and ontology in Gregory's treatment of philanthropy towards the poor.[110] Gregory argues that those who are poor and sick should be treated benevolently because they too are God's *eikones*.[111] Likewise, those who practise good works toward the poor and sick are

---

[108] Or. 38.11 (SC 358, 124-26).

[109] Or. 17.9 (PG 35, 976B-D).

[110] Gregory recalls the creation of humankind as reason for providing relief for the needy in Or. 14.26 (PG 35, 892B-D); see Verna E. F. Harrison, "Poverty, Social Involvement, and Life in Christ according to Saint Gregory the Theologian," *GOTR* 39, no. 1-2 (1994): 151-64, 156.

[111] For a thorough critique of all of the literature pertaining to poverty relief by the Cappadocians, see Susan Holman, *The Hungry are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in*

most like God,[112] where practising philanthropy increases the divinity of the *eikon*.[113] Gregory's views on the relationship between poverty, wealth and the *eikon* are consistent. They are scattered throughout his orations, poems and letters,[114] occurring in abundance in *On Love for the Poor*.[115] Holman has observed that Gregory exhorts his audience

> to imitate the ἰσότης of God, which translators render equality, evenhandedness, or "the justice of God." He also uses ἰσονομία, a Greek political term meaning "equality of rights."[116]

Roman Cappadocia (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1-29.

[112] Or. 14.22-23 (PG 35, 885B-888A); 14.27 (PG 35, 892D-893A).

[113] Or. 14.27 (PG 35, 892D-893A); 17.9 (PG 35, 976B-D).

[114] Or. 8.9 (SC 405, 262-64); the whole of Or. 14 (PG 35, 858A-909C); 26.6 (SC 284, 138-40); 38.5 (SC 358, 110-12); 43.63 (SC 384, 262-64). There are similar themes in *Against Wealth*; see Ulrich Beuckmann, *Gregor von Nazianz: Gegen die Habsucht (Carmen 1,2,28) Einleitung und Kommentar*. SGKA. NF 2 (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1988), 12.

[115] Or. 14 (PG 35, 858A-909C).

[116] Susan R. Holman, "Out of the Fitting Room: Rethinking Patristic Social Texts on "The Common Good"," in *Reading Patristic Texts on Social Ethics: Issues and Challenges for Twenty-First Century Christian Social Thought*, ed. Johan Leemans, Brian J. Matz, and Johan Verstraeten (Washington D.C., USA: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 103-23, 115.

Thus, the purpose of the human *eikon* is to function like God in all ethical concerns. The more she functions like God, the more the *eikon* becomes like God, vis à vis 'divine.'

Gregory continues to develop the ethical implications of being an *eikon* of God as a major theme regarding humankind throughout his writing. Numerous scholars have observed that Gregory's high view of the human *eikon* informs directly his ethics.[117] Exemplifying the scholarly opinion, Mumford argues, "the concept of the *eikon* functions for Gregory as it does originally in *Genesis*, as a source of 'normativity'."[118]

The Devil

Our final consideration of the biblical background to Gregory's account of the human

---

[117] Or. 7.9 (SC 405, 202); 14.20 (PG 35, 881D-884B); 14.27 (PG 35, 892D-896A); 26.10 (SC 284, 248); Carm. 1.2.25 (PG 37, 824, 148-53); 2.2.6 (PG 37, 1549, 89). See Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, 123-24; Stanley S. Harakas, "Presuppositions for Ethical Method in St. Gregory the Theologian's Five Theological Orations," *GOTR* 55, no. 1-4 (2010): 89-126, 120; Verna E. F. Harrison, "Male and Female in Cappadocian Theology," *JTS* 41, no. 2 (1990): 441-71, 456; Tasos Sarris Michopoulos, "Mimisometha Nomon Theou: Gregory the Theologian's Ontology of Compassion," *GOTR* 39, no. 1-2 (1994): 109-21.

[118] James Mumford, *Ethics at the Beginning of Life: A Phenomenological Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 188.

eikon concerns the interplay between the *eikon* and the devil, which is a consistent theme in the Bible and a strong tradition in apocryphal and pseudepigraphal writings.[119] The dearth of research directed towards the devil, not only with reference to Gregory's work, but also more widely in theology, relates to the effect of the Enlightenment on Western culture.[120] Modernity ushered in scepticism towards transcendent beings such as angels and demons. Consequently, when contemporary early Christian and biblical studies scholars pay due attention to the devil, it is often to demythologise themes concerning evil powers.[121] However, we should not confuse the worldview of the premoderns with that which was largely adopted through modernity.

The tradition which attests to the enmity between the human *eikon* and the devil appears first in Wisdom 2:23-24 as an interpretation of the first three chapters of Genesis:

---

[119] John R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: from Sirach to 2 Baruch*, JSPSS (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988), 178.

[120] For a review of the Enlightenment reluctance to accept the reality of spirits, see Phillip Wiebe, *God and Other Spirits: Intimations of Transcendence in Christian Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1-6.

[121] Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004), 194. Rudolf Bultmann was a key figure in this trend; Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch (London: SPCK, 1964), 1-44; Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

> …for God created us for incorruption,
> and made us in the *eikon* of his own eternity,
> but through the devil's envy death entered the world (φθόνῳ δὲ διαβόλου θάνατος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον),
> and those who belong to his company experience it.

Many scholars have observed that this theme of hostile angelic powers is also prevalent in the New Testament, particularly in Paul's letters.[122] The devil and his army of demons are seen as a threat to all that God has created, especially human persons.[123] Paul refers directly to the notion of evil powers with reference to Christ as the *Eikon* in two ways. First, Christ as God's *Eikon* has authority over the powers (Col 1:15, 2:10). The particular list of powers in Colossians 1:16 can also be found in apocalyptic writings, which are concerned with the eschatological defeat of evil.[124] Secondly, Paul writes in reference to the notion that the

> god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from

---

[122] Clint E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 158; Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, WBC (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982), 46.

[123] Dunn argues that Paul understood these powers to be real; see *Colossians and Philemon*, 93. For an argument against Dunn, see Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 48-52.

[124] 2 Enoch 20:1; 1 Enoch 41:9.

> seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the *Eikon* of God (2 Cor 4:4).

The "god of this world" refers to a darkness which is "cosmic, universal and demonic."[125] Most scholars are agreed that this refers to the devil since he is also named as a ruler in Ephesians 2:2, John 12:31, 14:30 and 16:11.[126] Whilst Paul does not give his readers a detailed description of what he thinks the evil powers are, it is clear that the notion of evil and the devil blur into one another as "an existentially real power cohered in single focus."[127]

Following Gregory, throughout the book, I identify "the devil" with the biblical Satan, fallen angel Lucifer and the serpent in the Garden of Eden, referring to them interchangeably.[128] In linking the various titles, Gregory follows a common patristic reading of Isaiah 14:12 which understands Lucifer, the Morning Star, to be speaking of both Satan who appears in Job and the serpent in Genesis 3.[129] Ezekiel 28

---

[125] Paul W. Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 220.

[126] Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 328. For Paul's writing about "powers," see Rom 8:38-39; 1 Cor 15:24; Col 1:16; Eph 1:20-21; Eph 6:12.

[127] Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, 109.

[128] For an overview of the tradition, see Jeffrey B. Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1987); Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 191-214.

[129] Justin Martyr was the Christian forerunner in equating Satan with the Serpent,

also contributes to this tradition, having been read as linking a cosmic rebel and an earthly king.[130] In the New Testament, Revelation 12:9 draws together the serpent and the devil. This biblical basis is generally recognised to be the most likely source of the tradition, rather than the theory that the 'fall of Satan' myth originated from Zoroastrianism.[131] Throughout his work, Gregory presents both the devil and the spiritual powers of darkness as enemies of the *eikon*. As Young's comment below indicates, Gregory's inspiration finds its origin in Jewish sources:

> A lively sense of the reality of Satan had been inherited from the Jewish Apocalyptic tradition, which clearly had a considerable influence on New Testament and second-century Christianity.[132]

The prevalence of the struggle between the forces of evil and the human *eikon* is a

---

Dial. Tryph. 45; also see Origen, *Princ*. 2.9.2.

[130] Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 139-44; Hector M. Patmore, *Adam, Satan, and the King of Tyre: The Interpretation of Ezekiel 28:11-19 in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), passim.

[131] Greg J. Riley, "Devil," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karen Van Der Toorn, Bob Beckling, and Peter W. Van Der Horst (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 244-49, 246.

[132] Frances M. Young, *The Making of the Creeds* (London: SCM Press, 1991), 88; Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 133.

theme which continues in the writing of the early church fathers. Origen, advancing a sophisticated demonology, identifies that demons are fallen angels. Unlike the view of pagan Greeks, who thought that some demons were good and others were bad, Origen states that all demons are evil.[133] They stand as powers behind the opposing political authorities, and their primary desire is to tempt human persons to sin.[134] Later, Athanasius writes most about spiritual warfare, particularly in *Life of Anthony*, where the progressive holiness and divinity of the *eikon* encourage more attention from the envious enemy. Athanasius stresses that it is the saints, having trained and placed themselves at the head of the battle, who struggle the most with the devil and his demons; however, they are far from helpless. Athanasius observes that in the Bible demons hold no sway even over the swine, since they must ask Christ's permission before they enter the swine. On the basis of this episode, he argues that demons hold even less sway over the person made as God's *eikon*, since she possesses greater authority over the powers of darkness than swine.[135]

Gregory develops this tradition, by drawing even more prolifically on the biblical and pseudepigraphal theme of the devil and fallen angels, in order to describe

---

[133] *Cels*. 5.5.

[134] *Princ*. 3.3.2; see Heinrich Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament* (West Germany: Herder and Herder, 1961); George Caird, *Principalities and Powers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956).

[135] *Vit. Ant. 29*, (cf. Matt 8:31); see Athanasius, *The Life of Antony*, trans. Tim Vivian, Apostolos N. Athanassakis, and Rowan A. Greer (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 2003), 126-27; David Brakke, "Athanasius," in *Early Christian World*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Taylor & Francis, 2002), 1102-27, 1122.

the struggle of the *eikon*'s existence as she endeavours to draw closer to God. Gregory refers to Satan with a variety of metaphors and titles, most of which can be found in Scripture. The vast number of names and descriptions demonstrate Satan's significance to Gregory. They also serve to demonstrate the multitude of ways in which Gregory understands Satan as a threat. Many of the names exist as a list in the poem *Aversion of the Evil One and Invocation of Christ*:[136]

> Thief, Serpent, Fire, Belial,[137] Vice, Death, Gulf, Dragon, Beast,[138] Night, Ambusher, Rage, Chaos, Slanderer, and Murderer.[139]

[136] Carm. 2.1.55 (PG 37, 1399-1401).

[137] Also, see Carm. 1.2.1 (PG 37, 556, 457); Or. 24.15 (SC 284, 74). Belial is the name for Satan which is widely used in extra-biblical literature where the name is given to a figure who is important as a deceiver; see S. David Sperling, "Belial," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel Van Der Toorn, Bob Beckling, and Pieter W. Van Der Horst (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 169-71, 170. It is also found in the form Beliar which occurs only once in the New Testament; 2 Cor 6:15.

[138] Rev 12:9; Rev 13:1.

[139] Carm. 2.1.55 (PG 37, 1399, 4); cf. Matt 4.10; 12.26; 16.23; Mark 1.13; 3.23, 26; 4.15; Luke 13.16; 22.3.

Elsewhere, Gregory uses "Satan,"[140] "Envy,"[141] the Evil One,[142] "the Devil,"[143] "the Adversary,"[144] "the Tempter,"[145] "the Enemy,"[146] "crooked,"[147] "ruler of the world,"[148] and "destroyer of the *eikon*."[149] Since Gregory refers to Satan specifically

[140] Or. 23.14 (SC 270, 310).

[141] Or. 6.10 (SC 405, 146); Carm. 1.1.7 (PG 37, 444, 66); 1.1.10 (PG 37, 466, 16); 1.2.1 (PG 37, 531, 120); 2.1.63 (PG 37, 1406, 4).

[142] ὁ πονηρός, Or. 2.88 (SC 247, 202); 6.10 (SC 405, 146); 28.15 (SC 250, 132); 30.6 (SC 250, 236-38); 37.10 (SC 318, 292); 37.12 (SC 318, 296); 38.14 (SC 358, 134); 40.10 (SC 358, 216), et al; cf. Matt 5:37; Eph 6:16; 2 Thess 3:3.

[143] ὁ διάβολος, Or. 2.62 (SC 247, 174); 35.3 (SC 318, 232); 38.12 (SC 358, 128); cf. Matt 4.1; 13.39; Luke 4.2-3, 6, 13.

[144] Or. 26.3 (SC 284, 230); 22.13 (SC 270, 248); 40.16 (SC 358, 230); see Francis X. Gokey, *The Terminology for the Devil and Evil Spirits in the Apostolic Fathers* (Washington: AMS Press, 1961), 68-69; Jeffrey B. Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), 34.

[145] Or. 30.6 (SC 250, 236); cf. Matt 4.3.

[146] Carm. 2.1.70 (PG 37, 1418, 4); 2.1.88 (PG 37, 1441, 168); cf. Luke 10.19.

[147] Carm. 1.1.7 (PG 37, 442, 41).

[148] Or. 1.4 (SC 247, 77); 8.12 (SC 405, 272); 11.4 (SC 405, 338); 14.21 (PG 35, 884C); 19.6 (PG 35, 1049C).

[149] ὁ φθορεὺς τῆς εἰκόνος, Carm. 2.1.65 (PG 37, 1407, 6); Or. 2.21 (SC 247, 118); 24.18 (SC 284, 80); 39.7 (SC 358, 162); 40.10 (SC 358, 218); Carm. 1.1.4 (PG 37, 419, 46-50); 1.1.9 (PG 37, 457, 9-12); 2.1.13 (PG 37, 1230, 43-50).

as the "destroyer of the *eikon*," it is clear that Satan represents a particular threat to the human *eikon* which she should not ignore. Below is a further example of Gregory's presentation of the devil's hatred of the *eikon* which occurs in an extract from *On His Own Life*. In it, Gregory mourns the devil's constant attack on the *eikon*. Note that here "the corrupter" (ὁ φθορεύς) is one of the many epithets given to the devil:

> Excessively numerous are the paths which lead away from
> both the straight and settled road,
> they all lead to the pit of destruction.
> Into this the corrupter has torn down the *eikon*,
> in order that he might gain a way of slipping in,
> dividing doctrines, rather than tongues like God in ages past.[150]

The *eikon*'s encounter with demons continues to be a key theme in the work of theologians upon whom Gregory has exerted an influence, in particular Evagrius Ponticus. He was a protégé of Gregory, serving Gregory as a deacon in Constantinople. He produced a comprehensive demonology and method of combat in

[150] Carm. 2.1.11 (PG 37, 1107-8, 1146-51). In his critical edition of the text, Jungck has corrected the aorist subjunctive passive λάβῃ to aorist optative active λάβοι, line 1150. For an alternative translation, see Caroline White, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Autobiographical Poems*. CMC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 95.

over five hundred types of demonic battles.[151] Brakke suggests that it is probable Evagrius "learned from Gregory about the danger of demonic thoughts [λογισμοί], and the possibility of refuting them verbally with powerful words."[152] In Chapter Four, we shall return to the problem of the devil's attacks on the human *eikon*; we cannot properly interpret Gregory's understanding of the human *eikon* without discussing her relationship with the devil.

In this chapter I have argued that Gregory interprets the experience of the human *eikon* in light of biblical themes and narratives. These include the creation narratives in Genesis; beliefs about images and idols; ideas about how the *eikon* might be perceived as 'divine;' ethics; and the *eikon*'s struggles with the spiritual powers of darkness. Whilst Gregory weaves into his vision of the human *eikon* a variety of biblical themes, his principal inspiration is Christ. With this in mind, we shall move to discuss Gregory's depiction of Christ, the 'identical *Eikon*.'

---

[151] David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), 49.

[152] David Brakke, *Talking Back: A Monastic Handbook for Combating Demons* (Minnesota: Cistercian Publications, 2009), 19.